



May 18, 2001

Mr. Steven D. Monté
Assistant City Attorney
Criminal Law and Police Division
City of Dallas
2014 Main Street, Room 206
Dallas, Texas 75201

OR2001-2054

Dear Mr. Monté:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 148624.

The Dallas Police Department (the "department") received a request for offense reports for all crimes occurring in the 8400 block of Skillman Avenue for the past three years. You inform us that some of the responsive reports pertain to various charges of sexual assault and a charge of injury to a child. You assert that the victims' identifying information in the sexual assault reports is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. You further assert that the report pertaining to the charge of injury to a child is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201(a) of the Family Code. We assume that you have released the remaining requested information. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.101 excepts from public disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Under section 552.101, information may be withheld on the basis of common law privacy. The doctrine of common law privacy protects information if it is highly intimate or embarrassing such that its release would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person and the public has no legitimate interest in it. *Industrial Found. v. Texas Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668 (Tex. 1976), *cert. denied*, 430 U.S. 931 (1977). In Open Records Decision No. 339 (1982), we concluded that a sexual assault victim has a common law privacy interest which prevents disclosure of information that would identify the victim. *See also Morales v. Ellen*, 840 S.W.2d 519 (Tex. App.--El Paso 1992, *writ denied*) (identity of witnesses to and victims of sexual harassment was highly intimate or embarrassing information and public did not have a

legitimate interest in such information). Accordingly, we have marked the sexual assault victims' identifying information that you must withhold pursuant to common law privacy. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 393 (1983), 339 (1982). Except for the driver's license number discussed below, you must release the rest of the information.

We note that the submitted information contains a Texas driver's license number. Subsection 552.130(a)(1) of the Government Code excepts from public disclosure information relating to a driver's license issued by an agency of this state. Therefore, you must withhold the driver's license number under section 552.130.

Section 552.101 of the Government code also encompasses confidentiality statutes. Section 261.201 of the Family Code reads in part as follows:

(a) The following information is confidential, is not subject to public release under Chapter 552, Government Code, and may be disclosed only for purposes consistent with this code and applicable federal or state law or under rules adopted by an investigating agency:

- (1) a report of alleged or suspected abuse or neglect made under this chapter and the identity of the person making the report; and
- (2) except as otherwise provided in this section, the files, reports, records, communications, audiotapes, videotapes, and working papers used or developed in an investigation under this chapter or in providing services as a result of an investigation.

We believe that service number 0904437J consists of reports, records, and working papers used or developed in an investigation made under chapter 261 of the Family Code. Because you have not cited any specific rule that the investigating agency has adopted with regard to the release of this type of information, we assume that no such regulation exists. Given that assumption, the requested information is confidential pursuant to section 261.201 of the Family Code. *See* Open Records Decision No. 440 at 2 (1986) (construing predecessor statute). Accordingly, you must not release the report pertaining to the charge of injury to a child to the requestor.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by

filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at 877/673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Department of Public Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.--Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the General Services Commission at 512/475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Polly McCann Pruneda", written in a cursive style.

Polly McCann Pruneda
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

PMP/sdk

Ref: ID# 148624

Encl: Submitted documents

cc: Ensearch Detective Services, Inc.
ATTN: Ashley Heflin
P.O. Box 518
Rockwall, Texas 75087
(w/o enclosures)